WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A lead removal apparatus for removing an implanted lead from a patient, comprising:

a proximal handle located about the proximal end of the apparatus, the proximal handle further comprising a elongate proximal portion that is adapted to assume both a first configuration and a second configuration;

wherein the first configuration includes a compacted, pre-formed shape, the proximal portion being constrainable into the second configuration, the second configuration being sufficiently straight in shape to permit passage thereover by a medical device having a passageway extending therethrough.

2. The lead removal apparatus of claim 1, wherein the proximal portion is adapted to at least substantially reassume the first configuration once the proximal portion is no longer being constrained into the second configuration.

3. The lead removal apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first configuration of the proximal portion comprises one or more coiled loops.

4. The lead removal apparatus of claim 3, wherein the first configuration comprises a plurality of coiled loops.

5. The lead removal apparatus of claim 1, wherein the proximal portion has a length of about 30 cm or greater.

6. The lead removal apparatus of claim 5, wherein the proximal portion has a length of about 40 cm or greater.

7. The lead removal apparatus of claim 6, wherein the proximal portion has a length of about 60 cm or greater.

8. The lead removal apparatus of claim 7, wherein the proximal portion has a length in the range of about 60-65 cm.

9. The lead removal apparatus of claim 1, wherein, the proximal portion comprises a length of intertwined wire.

10. A lead removal apparatus for removing an implanted lead from a patient, comprising:

a proximal handle located about the proximal end of the apparatus, the proximal handle further comprising a elongate proximal portion that is adapted to assume both a first configuration and a second configuration;

wherein the first configuration includes a one or more coiled loops having a shape memory, the proximal portion being constrainable into the second configuration, the second configuration being sufficiently straight in shape to permit passage thereover by a medical device having a passageway extending therethrough.

11. The lead removal apparatus of claim 10, wherein the proximal portion is adapted to at least substantially reassume the first configuration once the proximal portion is no longer being constrained into the second configuration.

12. The lead removal apparatus of claim 10, wherein the first configuration comprises a plurality of coiled loops.

13. The lead removal apparatus of claim 10, wherein the proximal portion has a length of about 30 cm or greater.

14. The lead removal apparatus of claim 13, wherein the proximal portion has a length of about 40 cm or greater.

15. The lead removal apparatus of claim 14, wherein the proximal portion has a length of about 60 cm or greater.

16. The lead removal apparatus of claim 15, wherein the proximal portion has a length in the range of about 60-65 cm.

17. The lead removal apparatus of claim 10, wherein, the proximal portion comprises a length of intertwined wire.

18. A lead removal apparatus for removing an implanted lead from a patient, comprising:

a proximal handle located about the proximal end of the apparatus, the proximal handle further comprising a elongate proximal portion comprising a length of intertwined wire measuring at least 40 cm, the proximal portion adapted to assume both a first configuration and a second configuration;

wherein the first configuration includes a plurality of coiled loops having a shape memory, the proximal portion being constrainable into the second configuration, the second configuration being sufficiently straight in shape to permit passage thereover by a medical device having a passageway extending therethrough; and

wherein the proximal portion has a tendency to resiliently reassume the first configuration once the proximal portion is no longer being constrained into the second configuration.